



## PREVENTIVE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL PROGRAM FOR ASSISTING YOUNG CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF SPECIFIC GROUPS

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper introduces my personal reflective experience on one positive social pedagogical practice. I have been able to explore various approaches within the “Preventive Social Pedagogic Program for Assisting Young Children and Adults of Specific Groups”. The program aims to prevent socially undesirable models of behavior such as dropping out of school, early marriage, and asocial and antisocial behaviors. The program stimulates the development of new abilities in participants and potentially improves their quality of life. The program has been practiced since 2009 at the Stara Zagora Social Center, family type, “A Small Group Home”. The program at the Social Center collaborates closely with the “Samaritans Association” of Stara Zagora, VIS of Italy, and “Czech Budeuovice” of the Czech Republic.

**The goal** of this research paper is to introduce and explore the core structure of the program in a way that makes it more visible and usable by other social institutions.

**Methods.** The subject of this resume is the analysis of the system, which has been done through research methods such as Case Study and Social Pedagogical Modeling.

**Conclusions** based on observation will include: 1) a clearly defined conceptual framework of the positive practice. 2) a full description of technological procedures. 3) a sampling of key elements of the program’s positive practice.

**Key words:** A Positive Social Pedagogic Practice; Preventive System

### THESAURUS (1)

Positive Social Pedagogical Service - the practice of the social pedagogical service, where it has found application in the system of proved effective practices and their technological solutions for individually oriented participation of children and adults of specific groups (marginalized groups, minorities, cultural or language difference, at risk, neglected, victims, etc.). The service has a foundation based on universal moral values and laws.

Preventive System - interdependent and interconnected in particular ways with characteristics, components, and functions in a given organizational structure, aimed to prevent and protect individuals from social and personally unacceptable behavioral models.

### IDENTIFICATION OF THE SERVICE

“Preventive social pedagogical system for

developing assistance for young children and adults from specific groups” (2)

A prototype of the system is the adopted way of life presented in Salesians by Don Bosco. The main subject of the research is the recognition of the System as a positive social pedagogical practice in Community center “Oasis”, Stara Zagora. The practice is seen in parallel organizations, including “Samaritan” Foundation - Stara Zagora, VIS - Italy, “Czech Buideviste” - Czech Republic and “Salesian of Don Bosco” Foundation - Bulgaria.

For the period between 2009- 2014, the clients of the social service of the Community Center “Oasis” were 304 children and young adults from specific groups. Currently, the center works with 50 children, 25 of which attend the center on regular basis.

### EMPIRICAL RESEARCH - METHODS, DATA, RESULTS, DISCUSSION

Encouraged by my teacher and academic mentor (3) to observe primary school students practice in Community Center “Oasis” - Stara Zagora(4), I applied two research methods:

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social pedagogical modeling and Case Study. As a result, three research products with practical application and use have been introduced: 1) Propaedeutic model of the System. 2) Case Study - profile of the child, identified as a child in need of "Preventive Social Pedagogical System for Developing Assistance for Young Children and Adults of Specific Groups". 3) Structural-technological model of the positive social pedagogical practice of the System.

Propaedeutic model of the concept of "Preventive Social Pedagogical System for Developing Assistance of Young Children and Adults of Specific Groups."

The system is oriented toward detection and development of the individual social potential of young children and adults of specific groups based on non confrontational and tolerant understanding of the Otherness.

The core concept emerged from the examination of the specific age boundaries of each individual's psychology and behavior, through an examination of my personal experience and an examination of the experience of young children of specific groups with social and behavioral deficits within a small christian community. The program may be viewed as a prosperous, harmonious manifestation of the modern social mission of the Christian Church (in the practice of the Salesians) or could be seen as a manifestation of the government's social interventions for care and support of socially deficit young children and adults.

The providers of the service are professionally competent specialists. They are dedicated to their small community in a way that resembles the way acquired skills would transfer to the family or other sub cultural communities. The System takes place in the not so articulated and measured zone of the free time of young children and adults.

"The School" - project study - active study; "Church" - christian theology- traditions and folklore; "Play" - art and sports; "Home" - activities and individual usefulness - are the four main pillars merged together in the daily life of young children and professionals through individual and team study of individual experience, and the personal social life expressed under the ideal of tolerant prosperity.

The community reality is rich with ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. The communication, interactions and interpersonal

perception as a whole unit - the communication in the Christian theological environment teaches the young children and adults to become united in their differences. Their periodic issuance and re-entry in the environment (the service in the community center) of assistance of care has a remarkably and intrusive effect on people who enter the community. The system has proven through time to remain both resilient and attractive. Gradually, the non confrontational approach of senior participants from the "specific" circle create an easily acceptable set of values, norms, culture, language, and adherence to the rules and exercise of rights. Even more remarkably and interesting is that existential manner occurs during social engagement, oriented towards personal development. Basically, it could be defined as method which stimulates personal and creative development.

A main characteristic is that a large percentage of the children, growing in up in the family environment, are engaged in the System through voluntary informed consent of the parents. Even more significant, a number of parents recognized their own risk behavior models and had the motivation for change. As a consequence of their own willingness to change, they participate in a social behavioral change program developed for their children.

Case study - child profile, identifies child in need of "Preventive Social Pedagogical System for Developing Assistance for Young Children and Adults of Specific Groups"

The structure of the described profile includes the following components: environment, emotional-behavioral and intellectual-behavioral cases, communication and personal evaluation.

The environment of the child or children before they reach the preventive caring support in "Oasis". The environment is crucial for defining specific social behavioral needs: deficit of attachment, indifference toward moral values, unsatisfactorily level of goal setting and low activity for achievement of goals, reduced or increased self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and rejection, unclear image of the social world and relationships, lack of motivation for perfection, aggression, victim symptoms, etc. Emotional-behavioral cases: experience of failure in translation of emotions and feelings in successful actions, tolerable and other valuable representations, outburst of anxiety, aggressive behavior, low level of self control and range of difficulties, created by non tolerable attitude of

adults and peers (teachers, parents, other students and participants in the group).

Intellectual- behavioral cases: a wide range of difficulties in cognitive processes - thinking, speaking, reading, writing, mathematical operations. Critical disagreement between capabilities and achievements of the child, deficit in the development of one or more spheres of cognitive processes - attention, memory, perception, challenged adaptation and obedience to social- pedagogical requirements.

Communication model cases: avoiding contact with individuals other than peers from the micro environment or group. Insubstantial attempts in the use of untruth, mimicry, critical level of trust in communication.

Personal evaluation: violations in the education of the child regarding their personal development of individuality, fluctuations in self esteem and sense of individuality, impaired sense of belonging to the family and society, unstable perception of personal abilities and skills.

Structural - technological model of the positive social pedagogical practice "Preventive Social Pedagogical System for Developing Assistance for Young Children and Adults of Specific Groups"

The graph of successful social orientation is stable and positive. It marks a reasonably quick impact of main factors- macro environment and those two main realia in which the system has been reflected- individual and micro environment, thus the System is being mastered and redirected in the socially and personally desired direction. The impact has been transformed in constructive interrelated influence- communication, interrelation, interpersonal perception, provoked by the preventive function of the System.

On the individual level, reported changes are marked in the mental-social and cognitive aspects. The clients respond positively to questions such as realization of the future, family values and continuity of the otherness in society, early orientation in the choice of career, and planning of the near future life path. Their individuality is an index based on the permanent tendency toward social acceptance and personal growth. Experiences of rejection, inferiority, and aloofness have not been observed. The results show improvement in all spheres of individuality, the most valuable being the achievement of cohesion between needs, motives and goal settings, reflected in behavior.

There were observed "positive side effects" in the family environment and micro community. Many parents of children clients achieved trust based relationships with the teachers and volunteers. The "Alive" meetings between parents and teachers were sought after by parents and provided a platform for an exchange of experience, consultation, and seeking advice regarding the growth and education of their children. The System encouraged positive development in relationships between parents and children because of the version of parenthood they presented and gained adoption for. An observed interrelated change was the awakening of social interest and practical morality.

Technology of the Structure Element "School" in the System

The project type learning in the described practice contributed to the outcome of teacher achieving the dominant role. Personal research and introspective activities give the teacher the opportunity not just to teach, but to encourage students to direct his/her learning activity and reflect on their outcomes. Project learning often provides more in depth learning opportunities while approaching a subject, particular problem, or question. Critical thinking was another observed consequence of the learning environment, in addition to the acquisition of skills for solving similar problems, and overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward the learning process and other students. Project learning occasionally sparked a joy for the creative process, often transformed of the subject into something "alive", consistently built a sense of group pride, and gave additional meaning to the ideal of belonging. Research of the Preventive Social Pedagogical System included an evaluation of the quantity and quality indication of learned skills and knowledge. The System's success is based on its core utility as effective motivation.

Technology of the Structure Element "Church" in the System

In child consciousness stakes role behavior to imitate particular model from surrounding world, whether this is a parent, teacher or peer. In a child's moral consciousness, role behavior dictates that they imitate people in their immediate surroundings, including parents, teachers and peers. Such a moral system needs "growth", development and perfection. The development of the moral system in young children is an open door towards tolerable behavior, patience, forgiveness and even avoidance of behavior with inherent



consequences. Social tolerance is evidenced by acceptance of other individuals despite differences, generated through discussions of readings and comparisons between the self and others, teaching them indirectly to be non-confrontational and selective. An understanding of traditions also contributes to a sense of belonging and acceptance. The inclusion of a variety of cultural elements, including costumes, objects and holidays build connections between individuals with a variety of backgrounds and skills.

#### Technology of the Structural Element “Play” in the System

Play is the foundation of the arts and sports activities. It has been observed to have a variety of outcomes, including: joy during play, interpretation of meaning, relationship building, and role-definition for children and young adults. According to needs identified by the teachers or volunteers during conversation with the children and young adults, the teachers are able to invite the children or young adults in games that respond to those needs.

#### Technology of the Structural Element “Home - Activities and Free time” in the System

Learning does not end when students exit the classroom, it is a process which needs to take place anywhere and anytime. There are a number of schools in which salesians teach, however in Bulgaria so far there is only one center “Oasis”, where children and young adults determined how to spend their free time, taking advantage of the amenities of the facilities and under close supervision of salesians, animators, and volunteers. Here, students developed skills and realized their own significance through diverse activities designed to stimulate the physical, intellectual, and creative demands of the students. The organization of their free time is introduced as an ongoing responsibilities or theme during workshops. Participation is mandatory, but only also the result of personal choice and the interest of the participants.

### **CONCLUSIONS - EVIDENCE, THROUGH WHICH THE “PREVENTIVE SOCIAL PEDAGOGICAL SYSTEM FOR DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND ADULTS OF SPECIFIC GROUPS” HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED AS POSITIVE PRACTICE**

The adopted definition of the concept for positive social pedagogical practice, given at the beginning of this research paper, consists of operational elements which allowed dissection, recognition, comparison, and

acknowledgment of the analyzed System as a positive practice.

Evidences, which have been derived from established results of the research:

1) The System is based on concepts with humane, personally oriented settings for proper social engagement of children of specific groups. The system operates through children and parents- gradually and patiently.

2) Basic conceptual foundations of the System have sourced scientifically credible evidence:

about each child’s mentality about existential needs of the child - emotional, cognitive and social, about mutual influence of the environment and the individual in development,

about leading activities that target different stages in a child’s development as an individual as they experience the interrelation between the three main activities - play, learning and work(5),

about specific social behavioral needs of children, neglected, tempted by destructive behaviors, and as victims of abuse and other social deficits,

about characteristics of a socially and pedagogically supportive environment, about preventive mechanisms

about intransitive universal moral values, equally attached to perspective (stable) and proscriptive (prohibitory) rules, norms, laws, and individual cohabitation.

The setting of universal moral values might cause a variety of interpretations, but in this particular research context, it has been considered secular ethic, based on Christian values (6). The system incorporates the tenth proscriptive (prohibitory) christian orders, as well as the tenth perspective (affirmative) christian blisses.

3) The system builds a creative and logical environment, while maintaining emotional depth, it supports, encourages and guides children toward learning through experience.

The main component of the System in the society is communication, which raises understanding of otherness, cohesion, a range of values, moods and attitudes. The children cherish communication in the society and at home, where they are predominantly accepted and loved; as in school, where new knowledge and skills are often useful for the remainder of their lives; as at the playground, where fun at times leads to a deeper understand the of the meaning and exploration of his/her life.

4) Motivation and maintenance of the interest in learning within the System is based on project learning. It is a powerful deductive tool, which develops creativity and learning in children during team work.

- 5) Children and young adults with specific social behavioral needs are urged toward change, reorientation of their values through new experiences and the impact of positive behavioral models. The discussion of Biblical themes, emergence of Christian values, and prevalence of personal examples all influence growing personalities indirectly and by choice.
- 6) The learning of different traditional models in a small community to foster tolerance and acceptance.
- 7) The system is directed toward early recognition of talents and development of creativity, curiosity, interests, and a sense of aesthetics in young children. This development is stimulated by a variety of themed workshops, field trips, walks in the nature, sports and the arts.
- 8) The system interprets play as a way to approach children. It appears in this context as an intransitive manner of communication, full of joy, friendship and acceptance of others despite being surrounded by a violent society and destructive local and global trends.
- 9) Last but not least is the evidence, which I present as my personal qualification, it is my personal experience(7) of the practical effect, application and usefulness of the "Preventive Social Pedagogical System for Developing

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